

THREE COUNT

Professional Wrestling Newsletter@
by Alex Marvez

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FLAIR ENTERS WWF; PIPER, HOGAN FEUDS INEVITABLE

Yes, the unbelievable has become true! Ric Flair has finally entered the World Wrestling Federation, and it appears the actual "wrestling" in the WWF will actually top that of Flair's former employer, World Championship Wrestling.

Flair officially signed a two-year contract with the WWF Sept. 5. He was under contract with WCW through September 1. Flair's contract, unlike the one at WCW, is not guaranteed.

Flair made an appearance on the WWF's Prime Time Wrestling show Sept. 9, and should start appearing on WWF interview segments this weekend.

But the biggest news is what will happen on television in early October. Flair and Roddy Piper filmed an unbelievable skit last Monday in Ottawa that will air then, and set up their feud for the fall.

Flair was walking to the ring for a "squash" match (the wrestling term for those unevenly matched, preliminary bouts that appear weekly on television) when he spotted Piper, WWF announcer/owner Vince McMahon and Randy Savage on the announcing podium (just in case you didn't know, all commentary for WWF matches is done in post-production. The scenes of WWF announcers each week are super-imposed). Flair walks up to Piper and begins taunting him, slapping him on the back of the head.

Finally, Piper and Flair begin brawling from the announcing podium to the arena floor. Flair grabs a chair and clobbers Piper, leaving him temporarily stunned. At that point, the usual entourage of WWF employees and referees come out to separate the two. Even McMahon came down to help. Piper revives and grabs the chair, swinging wildly and hitting McMahon. The WWF guru is then carried out on a stretcher.

Flair also filmed a Funeral Parlor segment in Ottawa, but did not wrestle. On the second night, Flair wrestled one squash match, defeating Jim Powers in two minutes with the figure-four leg lock.

The first Flair-Piper match is Oct. 18 in Kalamazoo, Mich. (How did they get so lucky?), and the two will also wrestle October 28 in Madison Square Garden. Flair and Hogan will meet for three consecutive days in California (the first match Oct. 25 in Oakland) in Hogan's first matches back from a short hiatus (he was filming another movie).

It is almost definite, though, that matches between Flair and Hogan won't pick up full steam until some time in November after Survivor Series, the WWF's Nov. 27 pay-per-view show from Joe Louis Arena in Detroit. Hogan vs. The Undertaker is almost definitely the headline match at Survivors. Look for Flair to head up a team (and, most likely, win).

So far, all the Hogan-Flair build up has been fantastic. The potential is there for sell-out crowds once more and one of the largest pay-per-view buy rates in history next April at Wrestlemania VIII. Flair was making \$780,000 a year in WCW (a guaranteed \$15,000 a week). I don't think he can equal that in the WWF, but he can come close, because he will be working off a portion of the gate.

Letters

I was wondering if you could answer the following questions:

1. Will the main event at Wrestlemania VIII be Hulk Hogan vs. Ric Flair or Hogan vs. Sid Justice?
2. Will The Hulkster retire after Wrestlemania VIII?
3. Is David Von Erich headed to the WWF?
4. Will there be a WWF-WCW supercard in the near future?
5. How large is the Indianapolis Arena that will hold Wrestlemania VIII?
6. How do you get all your information?

-- Robbie Bloom, Longwood

AM: In order:

1. I truly believe Hogan vs. Justice was the original plan for WM VIII, but with Flair in the WWF, a Hogan vs. Flair match is almost a definite.
2. There are always rumors of The Hulkster retiring, and with Hogan's age (38), rumors will increase over the next few years. I think Hogan sees mega financial opportunities in both a Sid Justice and Ric Flair feud, which will keep him around for a few more years. Also, if The Ultimate Warrior returns, there's another huge feud.
3. I think you were referring to Kevin Von Erich, because David died of a drug overdose in 1984 in Japan. And, if so, no way. He has a reputation of not showing up for his scheduled matches and personal problems outside the ring.
4. As long as the WWF can continue to raid WCW's top talent, there's no reason for the WWF to associate itself with the group. I also don't think WCW would be interested.
5. The arena in Indianapolis is The Hoosier Dome, and I believe the show will be scaled for 65,000-70,000 seats.
6. I get my information through a variety of wrestling sources (both in and out of the ring), and people in the promotions themselves.

I will be glad to answer any questions anyone has about the wrestling business or run letters with reader's comments. If anonymity is requested, please indicate so on the letter. Any advertisements for video tape or magazine trading will also be run free of charge.

Three Count is a professional wrestling newsletter published four times a month. Price for subscription is \$6 for one month, \$18 for three months, \$33 for six months and \$66 for one year. Please address all subscription checks to Three Count and send them to P.O. Box 12795, Gainesville, Fla., 32604-0795. Please include name, age, address and phone number.

Miscellaneous...

The Sept. 14 World Championship Wrestling show should be interesting. The show was originally scheduled for one hour, but when CBS bought the rights to the Atlanta Braves-Los Angeles Dodgers game, WCW was asked to resume its two-hour format. The one-hour show was already taped, so a match between Cactus Jack and Tom Zenk was taped Sept. 3 in Perry, Ga., to help fill the slot. The rest of the time, I believe, will be spent recapping current WCW feuds (not a bad idea, especially with a pay-per-view show coming up).

Dutch Mantell has returned to the United States Wrestling Association in Memphis. On his first show back, he asked throughout the telecast if anyone had seen Stan Hansen (a rib on The Desperados gimmick that failed miserably).

Billy Jack Haynes has returned to Portland, and is feuding with Demolition Crush (Bryan Adams of WWF fame).

The only other major news out of the Ottawa television tapings was the continued emphasis on Jake Roberts as one of the WWF's top heels (villains). Roberts threatened Gene Okerlund with his snake Lucifer, and either Okerlund was bitten or took a fall. It should be interesting to see whether the Roberts-Sid Justice feud draws money at the live matches, because Justice has not had any time to "get over" to the fans.

Think pro wrestling doesn't have pull? The WWF got the Detroit Red Wings to change their scheduled hockey game on Nov. 27 from the Joe Louis Arena arena so Survivor Series could be held.

Originally, the pay-per-view show was to be in Milwaukee, but the WWF's syndicated television show was moved to midnight on one of the local affiliates, raising fears of a weak crowd. Then the show was moved to Detroit, but was scheduled for the traditional Thanksgiving night. However, as an experiment for pay-per-view ratings, the show was switched to the Wednesday night before Turkey Day.

WWF spokesman Steve Planamenta said Thanksgiving night is usually horrible for television ratings, so the change was made as an experiment. It's funny, but the Survivor Series and Royal Rumble have always been my two favorite WWF pay-per-view shows, because of improved wrestling action and the fact almost everyone loses via pinfall in the elimination tag-team matches. Those two are the lowest rated of the four annual WWF pay-per-views.

An interesting story behind the new Repo Man character soon to debut in the WWF. Playing the character will be Barry Darsow, a.k.a. Demolition Smash, a.k.a. Krusher Kruschev. However, he is not the first Repo Man.

In Eddy Mansfield's International Wrestling Federation (Sunshine Network, 11 p.m., Fridays), "Nasty" Ned Brady (a pretty

good worker) was using the gimmick, coming to the ring in overalls with a crowbar, portraying a car repossession agent. Well, as the story was told to me by an anonymous source, Ned's manager, Nasty Ronnie (of the rock band Nasty Savage) called J.J. Dillon of the WWF to tell him about the gimmick.

Dillon, the WWF's assistant talent coordinator, said he was interested, and asked Ronnie to send a video tape. Ronnie did, and guess what ... the WWF trademarked the character. Now, Ned can't use the gimmick.

Pretty funny stuff. I understand the Coach gimmick was also stolen from a smaller promotion in north Florida/south Georgia.

Speaking of which, Coach (John Tolos) has apparently been let go from the WWF. It's a shame they didn't give his character more time to develop, but I think the reason they hired him in the first place was just to steal a character from Herb Abrams' Universal Wrestling Federation (I won't call them a rival promotion, because they're just too small).

With "Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig out for a while with a back injury, the only other wrestlers Tolos managed were The Beverly Brothers (Mike Enos and Wayne Bloom of American Wrestling Association fame). That duo will now be managed by The Genius (Leaping Lanny Poffo).

Even though the Flair-Piper and Flair-Hogan feuds are hot, the rest of the WWF's autumn feuds seem really boring. Some of the "marriages" (feuds, not another Elizabeth-Randy Savage hitching) are Jim Duggan vs. The Undertaker, IRS vs. The Big Boss Man, The Dragon vs. The Skinner, Bret Hart vs. The Warlord for the Intercontinental title, The L.O.D. vs. The Natural Disasters for the tag-team straps and The Bushwhackers vs. The Beverly Bros.

A preliminary lineup for Halloween Havoc has been established. The matches I can report with confidence are:

Lex Luger vs. Ron Simmons in a two-of-three fall match for the WCW title (It is very likely Dusty Rhodes will be in Simmons' corner, even though Rhodes and Simmons have never been close associates on television. Could Dusty be getting ready for a return to the ring?).

The Enforcers vs. The Patriots for the WCW tag-team titles (The Patriots are being pushed very hard because they are characters in one of Ted Turner's upcoming cartoon series, and it's good to please the boss).

A Chamber of Horrors match pitting Sting-El Gigante-Rick Steiner-Scott Steiner vs. Cactus Jack-The One Man Gang-Barry Windham-The Diamond Studd. Let's begin with all the problems involved in this match. First, the match will be held in some sort of plexiglass maze underneath a cage, limiting the bout to strictly brawling. Second, nobody knows the severity of Scott Steiner's triceps injury, but it's really stupid to be brining him back so soon. The gimmick alone should be able to sell the match, so his return won't be wasted. Plus, he's the hottest star in the group. Why risk further damage to his arm? And what does he have against any of the participants on the other side. According to the WCW storyline (as shaky as that is), he should be looking for revenge against The Hardliners (more on them later). Unless, of course, WCW is giving another dose of false advertising.

Other goodies about the match: To plug it on the Havoc commercials, they have been showing a clip of Windham rushing underneath a steel cage to attack Luger (the main event of Capitol Combat in May 1990). Why remind fans of the single stupidest finish to a pay-per-view show ever? Also, isn't Windham a babyface (good guy) now?

4. Of course, buried deep on the undercard is Terry Taylor vs. Bobby Eaton.

Kensuki Sasaki and Hiroshi Hase won't be coming to WCW on a year long tour after all. Sasaki broke his shinbone in a match in August, and will be out of action for a couple of months. New Japan Pro Wrestling, WCW's partner on shows in Japan, figured sending Hase alone would be stupid.

Hase and Sasaki, the best tag-team in wrestling this year, were scheduled to wrestle as The Japanese Fury. They have been replaced on WCW's October shows with The Young Pistols in matches against The Freebirds.

No line-up on Starrcade as of yet, except it will be December 29 from Norfolk (yes, the same place where Starrcade 1988 was held). Two main events have been bandied about -- Lex Luger (the mysterious package sender) vs. Sting (the package recipient) or Luger vs. El Gigante. New Japan was hoping for Luger vs. The Great Muta (Keiji Muto), but that bout will apparently headline WCW's Japanese Super Show Jan. 4 at the Tokyo Dome.

The Hardliners (Dick Murdoch and Dick Slater) have left WCW. Murdoch reportedly had personal disagreements with WCW executive vice-president Jim Herd, and left to wrestle in Puerto Rico. No word on where Slater is.

WCW's live shows continue on an abysmal pace. After drawing only 1,200 paying fans to its August Meadowlands show, WCW has canceled its Oct. 16 show.

Upcoming WCW shows are headlined by Ron Simmons vs. Cactus Jack and Sting-Barry Windham vs. Lex Luger-Mr. Hughes.

Look for a WCW show at the Sunrise Musical Theater Dec. 2 and at the West Palm Beach fairgrounds Dec. 3. I'll have a complete lineup of upcoming Florida shows in next week's issue.

SPOTLIGHT ON... **THE GLOBAL WRESTLING FEDERATION**

What: Joe Pedicino's attempt at becoming a third national promotion. The group features top independent wrestlers combined with local talent from Texas and Pedicino's Georgia All-Star Wrestling promotion.

Where: GWF announcers claim action is coming from The Global Dome, which in real-life is The Sportorium in Dallas. GWF announcers also claim GWF offices in places like Madrid and Tokyo. Kennesaw, Georgia is a more likely place (Pedicino's home office).

When: The GWF is shown at 4 p.m. weekdays on ESPN. About half the shows feature original material and matches; the rest are re-cap shows from previously aired material on ESPN. Pedicino, though, isn't really to blame for the repeats. ESPN wants custom formatted shows daily, and with his talent roster and production costs (not to mention the cost of wrestlers), it's difficult. That's why there were so many tournaments early on -- to fill air time.

Who's hot?: **The Patriot** (Del Wilkes) holds both the Global Television and Global North American titles. Wilkes used to wrestle as The Trooper in the American Wrestling Alliance, and is improving as a performer. Plus, Pedicino signed him to a three-year contract, so Wilkes offers someone stable to build around. **The Lightning Kid** (Walt Whitman) is a 6-1, 190-pound phenomenon. He can do tons of great moves in the ring, and flies better than anyone in North America. He is the GWF junior heavyweight champion. **Scotty Anthony** ranks with Bobby Heenan as the funniest people in wrestling, and is also a pretty good wrestler, too. **Muchan Singh** (a.k.a. Norman the Lunatic) is 100 percent better than his stint in WCW.

Who's not?: **Skandar Akbar** is strictly a stereotypical, regional type manager, even though he is helpful behind the scenes. **Rip Rogers** is given a "push" (promotion) in the GWF, yet he loses constantly in WCW squash matches, cheapening the GWF's credibility. Some young talent (**Chris Walker**, **Rasta the Voodoo Man**, **Axl Rotten**) are too green for even a smaller promotion. Commentators **Scott Hudson** and **Craig Johnson** lie so much in one telecast they make Vince McMahon seem like George Washington.

Outlook: I'm thinking the GWF will continue to do well on television -- if Pedicino isn't driven insane or broke by ESPN's latest demand -- 46 new episodes this fall. It's hard to produce entertaining television in such large quantities, which is one of the reasons for all the tournaments, and also produce syndicated television shows. I figure there will be longer matches in upcoming months. The fact current GWF shows have drawn the highest rating ever for wrestling on ESPN (a 1.3) is encouraging. And Pedicino is smart to hold off on running live shows until he either has better talent or better angles. A show Sept. 15 at the Cobb County Civic Center in Marietta, Ga., should indicate if the GWF is ready for a semi-regular road schedule. Another plus is the debut of Eddie Gilbert, who will have a feud with Al "Don't call me Lou" Perez and will probably be active in the GWF's behind-the-scenes match-making. Gilbert is a wrestling genius, and I think he can actually make Perez mean something. Look for a pay-per-view show eventually, but a December 8th date bandied about seems impossible.

Notes: Suncoast Pro Wrestling is offering Three Count readers two free tickets to its Sept. 28 and Oct. 26 shows at the Manatee County Civic Center in Palmetto, Fla. For tickets, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Henry Raines at 5748 14 Street West, Bradenton, Fla., 34207. Suncoast Pro Wrestling features Lou Perez, Tommy Rodgers and Dean Malenko as some of its top stars, and can be seen on WBSU in Sarasota (Channel 62) on Saturdays at 8:30 a.m. and on WTTA (Channel 38) in Tampa on Saturdays at 5:30 p.m. and Sundays at 4 p.m. Henry is selling a tape of three Suncoast shows for \$17.50. Write for more information.

Ladies Major League Wrestling held a card Sept. 10 before 183 people at City Limits in Fort Lauderdale. Results were: Penelope Paradise d. Big Bad Mama with a DDT, Allison Royale d. Linda Ryder, Debbie Malenko (fresh from her tour of Japan) d. A.J. Watson with a scorpion deathlock (best match of the night, 'Sexy' Bruno Sassi of IWF fame managed Watson), Luna Vachon d. Maliah Hosaka by reversing a Frankensteiner into a power bomb, Bambi d. Penelope Paradise and Bambi-Hosaka-Malenko-Royale d. Ryder-Watson-Mama-Vachon when Bambi small-packaged Luna. After the match, Penelope attacked Bambi, and combined with Vachon on a stuff piledriver. Then all eight women brawled around City Limits. Next card is scheduled for November. More info. next week.

The Universal Wrestling Federation has a television taping scheduled for Oct. 1 at City Limits. Scheduled as appearing are Paul Orndorff, The Black Harts, B. Brian Blair, Danny Spivey, Lou Albano and Bruno Sammartino. It will be interesting to see if this comes off. The Bradenton Herald reported last week that UWF owner Herb Abrams owes the Manatee County Civic Center \$6,900 dollars after using the building for his June 9 Beach Brawl pay-per-view show.

Next Issue: A look at the International Wrestling Federation in our Spotlight section, a complete Halloween Havoc lineup (I promise) and more goodies from the wrestling world. Once again, thanks for your support. Please, tell your friends. The more people who read, the more the newsletter should grow.

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